

Guidance Bulletin 3, 27th June 2016

As is customary every year, there have been several guidance counsellor meetings recently to review trends, progress and statistics. On 26-Apr-16 there was a meeting of local guidance counsellors at Institut Le Rosey, chaired by the former President of the Overseas Association for College Admissions Counselling, to discuss US admissions. On 24-May-16 there was a conference at Montreux for the Swiss Group of International Schools where the topics for over forty delegates included UK admissions tests, the new UCAS tariff and US restricted Early Applications. Within the foundation of the International School of Geneva there were guidance counsellor meetings at Nations on 17-Mar-16, LGB on 11-May-16 and La Châtaigneraie on 08-Jun-16.

Year 12: Viewbooks

Online viewbooks are a good way by which to become familiar with favourite universities. The University of Michigan offers a good example: <http://admissions.umich.edu/explore-visit/viewbook/>.

Years 11 and 12: Supercurricular activities

Extracurricular activities are an integral part of school life, whether as Creativity, Activity and Service in the IB diploma programme or Community and Service in the IB career-related programme. Such activities range from playing sports and running a club to going camping and serving at the Montbrillant soup kitchen. Supercurricular activities are a personal aspect of individual study. They include reading more deeply around a subject and engaging in directly relevant experiences. Highly competitive universities, especially those in the UK like Oxford and Cambridge, want to see convincing evidence of supercurricular activities. These experiences might be working in a Ghanaian hospital for an application to study medicine, digging on an archaeological site for an application to study archaeology and anthropology or building a bicycle for an application to study engineering. Reading lists for applicants are suggested by many universities, for example: Engineering <http://www.admissions.eng.cam.ac.uk/information/reading/>, English <http://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/offerholders/reading-lists/english.html>, Economics http://www.lse.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/DegreeProgrammes2016/economics/overview_and_features.aspx#DynamicJumpMenuManager_1_Anchor_7, Modern History <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/students/modules/hi172/readinglists/> and Psychology https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/media_wysiwyg/EP_PPL_Suggested_Reading_List_June_2013.pdf. As urged by the University of Oxford, it is often better to read one or two books carefully, and spend time thinking about their arguments and writing notes, rather than reading more, but unreflectingly. In the case of English, however, reading more books is better, while at the same time writing notes on plot, language and characterisation for later comparison and reflection.

Years 9, 10 and 11: Extracurricular activities

The International Baccalaureate programmes have extracurricular activities at their very core. The wealth of opportunities just at Campus des Nations, from sports and the Kermesse to drama and the India Evening, allow for a particularly wide choice. At the same time some students might wish to be involved further afield. Gap Force (www.gapforce.org) offers conservation projects, internships and medical volunteering around the world. Anyone applying to read medicine at a UK university needs substantial experience of working with people, ideally in a hospital or clinic. While such opportunities are difficult to come by in Switzerland, they are available through Gap Force in Ghana, Ecuador and elsewhere. Rustic Pathways (www.rusticpathways.com) runs camps and expeditions to explore a region, learn about its history and engage in its conservation. The International Summer School of Scotland (www.summerschoolscotland.com) runs a programme for 13 to 18-year-olds that encompasses debate, leadership and creative writing. ESL (www.esl.ch) has a huge range of language programmes to suit students of all ages, whether staying with host families or attending formal classes. The languages include French, German, Spanish, Italian, Arabic and Chinese.

Years 11 and 12: Notes from the visit by Johns Hopkins University on 13-May-16

Many of the undergraduate programmes at Johns Hopkins are interdisciplinary. There are 5,200 undergraduate students on the Homewood campus. This provides for intimate living, even though the

institution as a whole is much larger, the postgraduate body bringing the total number of students up to 21,000. Johns Hopkins secures more research funding from the federal government than any other US university. Undergraduates are afforded opportunities to help faculty members with their research. For interested freshmen/first year students a \$10,000 grant is offered to assist with research. Internships and study abroad are also possible and indeed encouraged. This is definitely not a place for the passive learner. Instead students must seek out new ideas and ask questions. Depending on the grades achieved by each student during their courses, appropriate advice is offered on which route to select next. At the outset every effort is made by the admissions office to balance applications so that no one major is given precedence. From outside the perception is sometimes of a bias towards the pre-med courses, but the reality is that Johns Hopkins is effective for a wide range of courses. While the curriculum is very open, prerequisites do need to be taken, for example Mathematics for Engineering. The International Baccalaureate diploma is fully recognised, but SAT or ACT scores are obviously extremely important too. The holistic view of applications taken by the admissions office means that all such information is assessed together. In such a cerebral atmosphere academics are naturally the key. Since Johns Hopkins is in Division 3, sports do not play such an important role in the admissions process, although they can still be considered.

Years 10 and 11: MYP scores and IB diploma predictions

An MYP score of 50 or above should lend confidence to a good IB diploma score in the future. In fact no one in this range over the past six years scored less than the minimum 24 points to secure an IB diploma. The average final score in the IB diploma was 35 points. Just two of the 106 students in this range were on the borderline with 24 and 25 points respectively. An application to a Russell Group university in the UK or to a leading Canadian institution such as McGill should generally be realistic. At the top end, 26 per cent of the students in this range even gained points that on paper could have led to an application to Oxford or Cambridge, although in reality the extra testing (for example the History Aptitude Test, Modern Languages Aptitude Test and Physics Aptitude Test) and interviews would have ruled out some of this group. To be as confident as possible about a bid for Oxford and Cambridge, or New York University (without the submission of SAT or ACT scores), an MYP score of 60 or above is preferable. From this MYP range the average score in the DP was 40 points. Even so, 32 per cent of this exalted MYP range still only secured between 35 and 39 points in the DP. [Taken from Grant, M. (2016) 'The International Baccalaureate: guidance counselling, predictions and the Middle Years Programme, *International Schools Journal* 35(2), 76-81]

Years 11 and 12 : Notes from the visit on 08-Feb-16 by École Supérieure de Commerce de Paris

ESCP is ranked 7th in the world for its masters programme. The bachelor programme only started in 2015. Students must change campus each year. To effectuate this they begin in London, spend their second year in Paris (taught in French) or Madrid (taught in English and Spanish) or Turin (taught in English), and finish in Berlin (taught in English with optional courses in German). The bachelor degree is accredited by the Berlin Senate. For entry to ESCP an International Baccalaureate diploma score of 32 points (not including bonus) is required. Maths SL is needed with as high a score as possible. The application process is conducted online. A transcript and two references/letters of recommendation are also requested. For study in Madrid or Paris Level B1 is needed in DELE or DELF respectively. After each applicant's file has been evaluated, tests are conducted on the preferred campus in logic, verbal reasoning and numerical ability. The classes are very international. For example, in Turin there are about 47 students in the year group made up of 16 nationalities. Teaching is not conducted by traditional methods. Rather, since they work in business, teachers bring real life situations to the classroom. There is a careers adviser on each campus to help with searching for internships, composing covering letters and writing a curriculum vitae. Internships can be done anywhere in the world. In Turin there is an agreement with a local letting agency to find accommodation. Usually departing students pass on their accommodation to new students. The annual tuition fee is €12,800. ESCP in Turin is housed inside the main University of Economics and students can make use of the facilities provided by this university. The largest campus is in Paris with its 1,000 masters students. An added extra in the curriculum is the element of Liberal Arts (History, Sociology, Psychology and International Relations). Students from a French lycée cannot enter the bachelor degree at ESCP because of the requirement to complete the *prépa* for a *grande école*.